

shop-proven products

These woodworking wares passed our shop trials.

Hearing protection that cancels shop noise

It's no wonder noise-canceling headphones are popular among travelers. These new gadgets "hear" environmental noise (such as the constant drone of aircraft engines) and generate a frequency that cancels out the drone. Now the same technology has come to the wood shop in the form of NoiseBuster Safety Earmuffs.

The day the muffs arrived, I headed straight to my portable planer, slipped the NoiseBusters over my ears, and fired up that loud machine. With their power switch off, they worked about as well as my other muff-style hearing protection, but didn't cut the sound as well as my usual in-ear plugs. Then I pushed the dust-sealed power switch, and instantly the planer noise seemed to drop by half. Impressive. The NoiseBusters yielded the same results when used with outdoor power equipment, including a mower, chipper, and chainsaw.

There's no radio on the NoiseBusters, but a stereo headphone jack allows you to plug in a portable radio or MP3 player (and not run it louder than an unhealthy 85dB). A buddy took my NoiseBusters to a NASCAR race and plugged a scanner into the jack. He eavesdropped on the conversations between the pit crews and drivers while shutting out most of the track noise.

The manufacturer says you'll get about 65 hours of use from the single AA battery that powers NoiseBusters. That's probably about right. (I left mine on by accident a few times because the power indicator LED isn't very bright and it hides behind the headband.) And NoiseBusters aren't cheap—they cost about as much as a cordless drill. But 20 years from now, I'll still have my hearing, and that drill will be a distant memory.

—Tested by Dave Campbell



NoiseBuster PA4000

Performance ★★★★★
Price \$150

Pro Tech Communications
877/226-1944; noisebuster.net

Space-saving sliding mitersaw

I've resisted buying a 12" sliding mitersaw because it takes up almost as much space as a contractor-style tablesaw, and fits up against a wall about as well. But Hitachi's C12LSH gives a full 12"+ of crosscut capacity, yet requires only 25" of bench depth. (Including the miter-locking handle, its total depth measures just over 36".)

The secret to its compact footprint? The head (motor and blade) on most sliding mitersaws is fixed to a pair of rails that slide in the saw's base. On the C12LSH, the head slides on fixed rails, similar to the way the head slides on a radial-arm saw. (You can lock the head on the rails and have the rails slide in the base like a typical saw, but I found no advantage in that.)

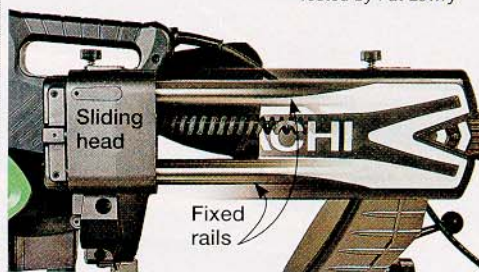
As the premier mitersaw in the toolmaker's line, the dual-bevel C12LSH has a base-mounted laser (no need to turn on the saw to see the line) that adjusts to the left or right side of the blade in seconds without tools. The line proved accurate throughout my testing, but I didn't haul it to a jobsite to see how well it held after being banged around.

The C12LSH also sports two features unique to Hitachi mitersaws:

microadjustments for both the miter and bevel angle, and a digital LCD display on a flexible gooseneck that shows both angle settings, accurate to 0.5°. I made a number of miter and bevel cuts at random angles, noting the reading on the display, and then compared that reading to the measurement on my protractor. The cuts were dead-on every time. Next, I made several inside and outside compound cuts in 5" crown molding while trimming out a room and crowning a cabinet. The fit on all joints proved tight.

The \$650 price tag may give you pause, but it's not out of line for a 12" dual-bevel slider. Hitachi also sells a version of this saw without the digital display (model C12RSH) for \$50 less.

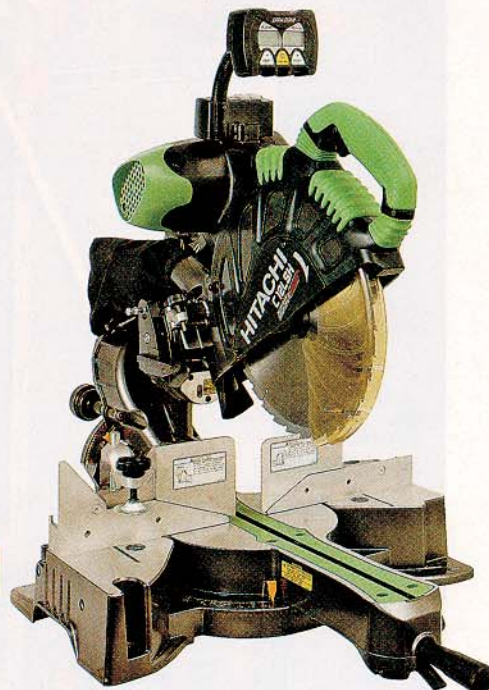
—Tested by Pat Lowry



Hitachi 12" Compound Mitersaw C12LSH

Performance ★★★★★
Price \$650

Hitachi Power Tools
800/829-4752; hitachipowertools.com



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